Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, DC 20554

In the Matter of AT&T Mobility Spectrum LLC; BellSouth Mobile Data, Inc.; New Cingular Wireless PCS, LLC; and SBC Telecom, Inc. Petition for Limited Waiver of Interim Performance Requirement for 2.3 GHz WCS C and D Block Licenses	)	WT Docket No. 16-181

COMMENTS OF MOBILE FUTURE

Mobile Future provides these comments in support of AT&T's petition for a limited waiver of the Commission's interim performance requirement for the 2.3 GHz Wireless Communications Service ("WCS") C and D Blocks under the Commission's rules.[1] Granting AT&T's Petition will facilitate the deployment of essential smart grid services in the 2.3 GHz WCS spectrum and is in the public interest.

I. Introduction

Efficient and productive spectrum use is a key element of successful wireless and technology policy. At times, adjacent and nearby spectrum uses constrain "the art of the possible" uses for a given band. Here, AT&T has developed an innovative, non-interfering LTE smart grid solution using the WCS C and D Blocks without requiring changes to the technical

[1] *AT&T Mobility Spectrum LLC; BellSouth Mobile Data, Inc.; New Cingular Wireless PCS, LLC; and SBC Telecom, Inc.*, Petition for Limited Waiver of Interim Performance Requirement for WCS C and D Block Licenses, File Nos. 0007239621, et al. (filed Mar. 29, 2016) ("Petition"); Supplement to Petition for Limited Waiver of Interim Performance Requirement for WCS C and D Block Licenses (filed May 18, 2016) ("Supplement to Petition").

rules.[2] This solution represents the best chance to make productive use of this spectrum for the foreseeable future and will help to achieve pressing national energy goals.

II. Granting AT&T's Petition Is in the Public Interest

By all accounts, the smart grid offers valuable benefits to electricity consumers of every type, to the facilities that are used to serve them, and to progress towards renewable energy and other distributed energy resources. Although smart grid deployments have been limited, recent reports from electric utilities at the leading edge of the smart grid highlight enormous benefits. For instance, ComEd's ongoing smart grid deployment efforts in the Chicago metropolitan area have enabled it to improve reliability for four consecutive years, resulting in a 99.99% reliability factor in 2015.[3] According to ComEd, its customers experienced a 12 percent reduction in the frequency of outages from 2014 to 2015, saving an estimated $1.1 billion dollars.[4] Energy efficiency programs and smart-meter-enabled pricing also enabled ComEd to deliver a $67 million rate reduction to its customers this year.[5] Likewise, PPL Electric Utilities, which serves more than 1.4 million customers in Pennsylvania, recently reported that smart grid investments and other efforts to improve reliability helped the utility to avoid nearly 200,000 power outages

[2] AT&T explains that it explored numerous alternatives to successfully utilize the C and D Blocks over the past several years to no avail. These alternatives apparently included air-to-ground service, wireless backhaul, fixed wireless local loop services, and low-power overlay to support Internet of Things devices. Petition at 7.

[3] News Release, "ComEd Reports on Improved Reliability in Chicago" (June 7, 2016), https://www.comed.com/newsroom/pages/newsroomreleases_06072016.pdf?FileTracked=true.

[4] ComEd, *Delivering on the Smart Grid Promise: Laying a Foundation for the Future*, at 4 (2016), https://www.comed.com/documents/about-us/progress-report-final.pdf?FileTracked=true.

[5] *Id.* at 5.

during the first half of 2015.[6] Put simply, granting AT&T's waiver request will help utilities expand their capabilities for the benefit of consumers and the nation's economy.

Wireless technology is playing a foundational role in the smart grid revolution.[7] As the Edison Electric Institute (EEI) recently observed, "[e]lectric utilities make particular use of wireless communications in their vital supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA), distributed automation and field operations systems."[8] EEI also noted that wireless communications are important for reliable electric utility operations because it is not as vulnerable to a natural or man-made disaster.[9] In a similar vein, a working group comprised of executives from California investor-owned utilities and grid-associated businesses recently developed a "collective vision for the grid in 2030."[10] To achieve this vision, one of the guiding principles adopted by the working group recognizes that "utility [communications] networks, and increasingly, private networks, are essential for meeting common objectives."[11] Accordingly, there can be no doubt that dedicated network solutions, such as the one developed by AT&T and Nokia, hold tremendous promise to support groundbreaking efforts by utilities and other stakeholders to optimize the grid.

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[6] Robert Walton, *PPL: Reliability efforts avoided almost 200,000 outages so far this year*, Utility Dive (Aug. 7, 2015), http://www.utilitydive.com/news/ppl-reliability-efforts-avoided-almost-200000-outages-so-far-this-year/403620/.

[7] *See, e.g.,* Department of Energy, *Communications Requirements of Smart Grid Technologies* (2010), http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/gcprod/documents/Smart_Grid_Communications_Requirements_Report_10-05-2010.pdf

[8] Response of the Edison Electric Institute to the IOT Request for Public Comment, at 3, NTIA Docket No. 160331306-6306-01 (June 2016).

[9] *Id.* at 6.

[10] *See* AEE Institute, *Toward a 21st Century Electricity System in California*, at 6 (Aug. 2015), http://info.aee.net/hubfs/PDF/aeei-toward-21ces-ca.pdf?t=1439494418628.

[11] *Id.*

Granting AT&T's waiver request would also be a pragmatic and forward-looking approach that allows time to market and deploy these smart grid solutions while bringing the spectrum into a productive non-interfering use. Regulated electric utilities "are by their nature slow to commit their capital."[12] By the same token, an energy industry observer at the University of Pennsylvania's Kleinman Center for Energy Policy has observed that:

> Due to the highly regulated nature of electric utilities, significant investments in new technologies or innovative services generally require alignment of both utility business strategies and governmental policies. This tends to slow the innovation cycle in the industry, as utilities seek assurances regarding cost recovery of prudent investments while regulators want demonstrations that new investments broadly serve the public interest.[13]

To be sure, a growing number of states are contemplating new regulatory models that are designed to leverage new technologies and accelerate innovation cycles in the energy sector.[14] However, in its consideration of AT&T's buildout extension request,[15] the Commission must be mindful that the results of these efforts will also take time to implement.

III. Conclusion

Commission approval of the petition is in the public interest because it will promote investment in and the deployment of essential broadband services in the 2.3 GHz WCS spectrum and facilitate the co-existence of the WCS and SDARS.

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[12] Petition at 19.

[13] Christina Simeone, *PA Future Utility Part II: Electric Utility Opportunities and Challenges* (Jul. 14, 2015), http://kleinmanenergy.upenn.edu/policy-digests/pa-future-utility-part-ii-electric-utility-challenges-and-opportunities

[14] *See, e.g.,* New York State Department of Public Service, *Reforming the Energy Vision*, Staff Report and Proposal, Case No. 14-M-0101 (Apr. 2014).

[15] Supplement to Petition at 4.

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